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ABSTRACT

Four papers concerning the Lawrence (Massachusetts) Literacy Coalition, a consortium of 12 two- and four-year colleges supporting adult literacy activities in the region, are presented. The first paper offers an overview of the coalition, including the reasons for its formation, a definition of literacy, the scope of the coalition's work, and possible directions for the future. An institutional registration form is included. The second paper consists of a poem about literacy and the Hispanic community of Lawrence. The third paper discusses the need for a language minority task force, emphasizing that grantsmanship alone can not create a successful English-as-a-Second-Language literacy program, but that minority language community input is essential to guide program design and content. The final paper is a 5-year comprehensive literacy plan for the Lower Merrimack Valley, which outlines program organization, needs and resources, the process of identifying key issues, recommendations for implementation, and five broad, specific objectives for implementation in the near future and by 1993. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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WORKING PAPERS FROM THE LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION

BY

TOMAS MARIO KALMAR

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LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION

Working Paper #1

An Overview of the Coalition

Tomás Mario Kalmar
January 15, 1988

Bradford College • Emerson College • Endicott College • Gordon College • Marian Court Junior College
Merrimack College • Middlesex Community College • Montserrat College of Art • North Shore Community
College • Northern Essex Community College • Salem State College • University of Lowell

LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION

Working Paper #1

An Overview of the Coalition

Tomás Mario Kalmar

Why a Coalition?

There are many adults in the Lawrence area who feel the need to become more literate. Many concerns about adult literacy are currently being expressed through a wide variety of channels, in an overlapping network of groups and organizations, and in various languages -- and professional jargons. Within each such group, individual and institutional members agree and disagree, with a normal balance between co-operation and competition. A need has been widely expressed to create a local Literacy Coalition, in order to pool resources, to draw lines between distinct concerns, to maximize 'productivity' and to minimize unnecessary competition.

I stress the word unnecessary, because a certain degree of competition is not only inevitable but also healthy. When material resources are scarce, competition is appropriate. And in a lively community like Lawrence, healthy competition among different models of the adult literacy process is surely all for the good.

What is Literacy?

In theory a definition of "literacy" should precede the formation of a coalition; in practice it makes more sense to do it the other way around. Too narrow a definition of literacy would defeat the main goal of the Coalition, which is precisely to ensure that all voices are heard, discussing literacy from contrasting and even contradictory points of view. In due course the Coalition will surely want to draw up a map, as it were, of varieties of literacy, in the hope of supporting agreements on who will deal with which variety. At the same time it is important to avoid the pitfall of letting "Adult Literacy" become just the latest buzzword, meaning everything in general and nothing in particular.

Currently, the following kinds of literacy activities are already on the map, as far as Lawrence is concerned:

a) Lawrence Public Schools have played an historic role in providing classes for adults who did not complete their education as youngsters. This service continues to be provided by the excellent classes conducted at the Adult Learning Center.

b) Colleges, here as elsewhere, are increasingly reaching out to adult learners whose mother tongue is not English. In Lawrence, the LEEP program supported by Northern Essex Community College is a fine example of this approach to adult literacy.

c) A "social service" (as distinct from "academic") model of adult literacy is implemented in various ways by a number of agencies, many supported by Gateway Cities funding.

d) The private sector, in addition to supporting publicly-funded projects of the above three kinds, has its own interest in adult literacy, ranging all the way from "Workplace Literacy" projects (in collaboration with educational agencies) to customized in-house skills training. The Private Industry Council, the Greater Lawrence Chamber of Commerce (especially through its Business/ Education Collaborative) and individual businesses have already put literacy on their maps.

e) There are also various literacy activities that can be described as "non-funded". These take place in churches, in cultural clubs, at the Public Library, and in people's homes.

The above list is by no means complete. It is a sketch of what I have already seen happening in Lawrence, a sketch which I trust the Lawrence Literacy Coalition will turn into a detailed comprehensive directory of current service.

The Coalition's Scope of Work

The primary mission of the Lawrence Literacy Coalition is to design a comprehensive plan to address the literacy needs of Lawrence and the Merrimack Valley in the immediate and long-range future. Our contract with Gateway Cities and the Massachusetts Department of Education calls for delivery of the plan by July 1988. To accomplish this task, the Coalition's Provisional Steering Committee will meet regularly, presumably with the cooperation of appropriate task forces, to consolidate and complete the assessment of the region's literacy needs in the years to come.

A Vision for the Future

Once the comprehensive plan has been designed and endorsed by the Lawrence Literacy Coalition, it may choose to go through the formal process of becoming an autonomous entity, with membership criteria, an elected Steering Committee, and by-laws. It may well choose to join the nation-wide Urban Literacy Network to organize advocacy on a broad front around literacy issues.

The Lawrence Literacy Coalition already enjoys the support of the Mayor of Lawrence, of the Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, of the Gateway Cities Advisory Board, of the ESL Consortium, and of Senator Patricia McGovern and other elected officials. It can surely count on continued mutual support if it succeeds in maximizing the efficient delivery of adult literacy programs in the region.

LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION

Coordinator: Tomás Kalmar

address:
NECCUM Office
51 Lawrence Street
Lawrence, MA 01841
Phone: 617-685-3658

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Title and Organization (if applicable)

_____

Phone: _____

☐ Please add my name to your mailing list.

☐ I am especially interested in
___ bilingual literacy
___ academic literacy
___ social services
___ workplace literacy
___ church-based literacy
___ club-based literacy
___ other: _____

☐ I would be willing to serve on the Provisional Steering Committee and/or a task force in my special interest group.

☐ Other comments:

_____

_____

Dear Tomás,

I am taking at face value
your offer to let
new voices be heard
through the Lawrence Literacy Coalition.

Some of my best friends are Anglos.
But there are times
when plain truths
need to be spelled out
clearly, if possible.

I find it difficult to say
what I think needs to be said
in English.

But I also find it difficult
to say in Spanish, although
for very different reasons.

Words like recruitment, retention,
positive termination make
very little sense
in Spanish.

I confess I wonder
how much sense
they can make
even in English.

When I speak Spanish
I speak to people who already
understand what I am
trying to say.

But when I speak English,
Anglos seem to have no idea
what I am talking about.

Therefore I ask you, Tomás, to decide whether "Even In My Own Tongue" is the sort of thing that would help build the Lawrence Literacy Coalition. If so, do what you think best with it.

Tu tocayo,
Fulano.

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LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION

Working Paper #2

Even in My Own Tongue

Fulano de Tal

March 28 1988

Nisiquiera en la lengua mia.

Fulano de tal.

I

It is true that there are a lot of Hispanics
in Lawrence,
illiterate Hispanics.

But it's also true
that there are many Hispanics in Lawrence
who are very literate.
Twice as literate
as the people
who control
the major power
in the city.

II

It is frustrating to be twice as literate as someone
who makes decisions about your life
without asking for your opinion.

III

I've attended many meetings in Lawrence
and the only one that was properly conducted
according to Robert's Rules of Order
was a formal business meeting
of Latino association
conducted entirely en castellano.

The decisions made
at such a meeting
are legitimate decisions
backed by authentic
democratic process.

Lawrence has a precious resource:
Bilingual parliamentarians
who remain faithful to democracy
despite everything democracy has suffered
not just in Latin America
but here in the USA.

I do not recall hearing this resource
mentioned
while among people who talk nothing
but English, English, English.

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IV

Sad to say
there is a tendency to assume that
calling someone Hispanic
is pretty close to
calling them illiterate.

At least this is so
in my circles
because, perhaps,
education is my trade
and truly illiterate Hispanics
como mi compadre que no sabe ni la u
are notoriously "hard to reach".

V

"Some of my students can't
read and write
even in their own language".

This is a remark you hear
over and over again.

VI

It's a dead give-away:
even in their own language!
can you believe it!
incredible!

And yet it's hard, isn't it,
to imagine someone saying
this very thing about illiterate
Anglos. Try it: imagine Gerry d'Amiro

saying "There are red-blooded Americans
who can't read and write
even in their own language."

It sounds very odd.
If you can't read and write,
that's that.

Imagine someone saying
"I can't read and write,
even in my own language."
It would be absurd!

VII

I can read and write
even in my own language.

The only way I can make sense
out of this situation
is to accept the fact:
reading and writing is one thing
leer y escribir no vale nada.

Knowing how to read and write
in my own language
speaking in my own voice
is not enough.

In order to be literate
I must be able to read and write
in another language.

I must make
another tongue
give voice
to my meaning.

VIII

For two thousand years
you could call yourself
literate
letrado
if the only language you knew
was your own.

You were not
literatus
if you read no Latin, no Greek.

Not a lettered man.
Not a citizen in the Republic of Letters.

IX

My friends can read and write
but only in their own language.
If that's Spanish
it's not enough,
if English
it's plenty.

X

Adult literacy
the way it's talked about
entails a double standard.

Semi-literacy for Anglos.
Real literacy for Hispanics.

But I have never heard
anyone say
"Hispanic literacy"
to mean true
real literacy
worthy of the name.

I confess I often hear Hispanic
used as a pejarative term.
Hispanic this, Hispanic that:
it often conveys a sense of
peor
inferior this, inferior that.

Hispanic Literacy: inferior literacy.
Alfabetizacion peor.

XI

I must say
I don't feel
too bad
because I use
Anglo
as a pejorative term.

For me, Anglo is peor.

I don't know what else to use.
"White" is not what I mean,
is it?
In Spanish we often say
los blancos
to refer to
the Anglos.

"Non-Hispanic"
would make me gag.

XII

So I say Anglo.
You object.
"I'm Italian," you say.
Or "I'm not Anglo
I'm Irish."
And so on.

Nimodo.
We Hispanics need some label
to throw back at
you Anglos.

That's what it sometimes comes down to:
treat me with respect
and I treat you with respect.

In Spanish we say
respeto
which is much more
than mere respect.

XIII

Anglo: "I can read and write
but only in my own language."

Hispanic: "Poor Anglo!
I can read and write
not only
in my own language
but also
in yours.
I know something
you don't."

XIV

<u>Manifesto</u>

The Hispanic Community of Lawrence
will begin to get the respect it deserves
when Anglos who can read and write
in only one language --
only in their own --
abolish their own illiteracy
before venturing forth
to "overcome Hispanic illiteracy".

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LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION

Working Paper #3

Do We Need a Language Minority Task Force?

Tomas Mario Kalmar
April 19, 1988

LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION
WORKING PAPER #3: Do We Need a Language Minority Task Force?
Tomas Kalmar, April 19 1988

My work as Coordinator of the Lawrence Literacy Coalition requires me to manage a two-way translation process.

When I speak Spanish I'm often engaged in interpreting an entire universe of discourse, the whole idea labeled "Adult Literacy". It's not just a question of finding two words, one to translate the noun "literacy" and another to translate the adjective "adult". I feel that I have been charged to do whatever I can to engage the active participation of as many Spanish-speaking Laurentians as possible in the Lawrence Literacy Coalition. (70% of my funding comes from Gateway Cities.) And so when I'm conversing in Spanish about the Coalition I often (not always) see in my mind's eye the entire system: the process that persuades the Legislature to establish a line item for Adult Literacy, the flow of millions of dollars of taxpayers' hard-earned money, the people who actually write the RFP's in the Mayor's Office, the distribution of RFP's to potential "vendors", "providers", "agencies", the agencies themselves with their (often invisible) Governing Boards , Administrators, full-time staff, overworked underpaid part-time teachers (who tend to come and go through a revolving door called "staff turnover", "burnout")... I see the person at the agency who writes the proposal, and sometimes I see the bidders' conference with its peculiar group dynamics ... I see, in my mind's eye, the proposal itself: the target population, the eligibility requirements, the outreach, retention, termination policies, the curriculum, the measurable outcomes, the budget, the staffing pattern, the resumes, the letters of support ... I see the proposal review process, the point-system, culminating in the final decision that authorises the winnning agency to go ahead and "run" an adult literacy program for yea many "slots" ...

All of this, indeed much more, is in my mind's eye as I converse in Spanish about the Coalition, because all of it, the whole ball of wax, is included in the code word Adult Literacy and its acronyms -- ABE, ESL, GED, even DPW/ET/PVBS ...

How to say all of this in Spanish? I try but I do not succeed. And yet when I leave it out I wonder how Spanish-speaking Laurentians will ever run their own publicly-funded literacy programs. No matter how deeply we Hispanics may have reflected on adulthood, literacy, languages, no matter how experienced we may be in the process of alfabetizacion (the dictionary translation of "literacy"), no matter how intelligent and well-educated we may be -- control of publicly-funded Adult Literacy programs will remain in the hands of those who understand "the RFP process" inside out.

But there are other times when, conversing in Spanish, I forget all this, because I become absorbed in intriguing arguments about what language is for, what the alphabet is for, what a community is, what feeds the soul, how adults solve problems in a mature way, how friends learn from friends with no money changing hands, public or private. And then I feel that my work requires me to go back to my English-speaking friends and colleagues, to interpret, as best I can, what Spanish-speaking Laurentians are saying to one another about the power of speech, about literacy that builds community -- a universe of discourse that sometimes seems to be ignored by English-speaking committees and task forces.

This is why I say my work requires me to manage a two-way translation process. Certainly Hispanics -- and any other Linguistic Minorities -- who are unaware of the RFP process will never run a publicly-funded adult literacy program. But by the same token, Anglos (pardon the expression) who run top-notch adult education programs seem to be unaware of the biggest "gap in services", or if they see the gap, they seem unable to bridge it. The major Adult Literacy programs in Lawrence are top-notch: as good as any in the Commonwealth. But in Lawrence, as anywhere else, very few programs can even "target" the population of analfabetos, "zero level adults" who are "illiterate even in their own language". And the few programs that try to "serve" this "hard-to-reach" population are plagued by headaches. Outreach is a headache. (How do you say "outreach" in Spanish?) Assessment is a big headache. By what criteria do you measure the reading "level" of someone who attended a village school in a foreign country in the 1940's? The biggest headache seems to be "retention". And proving to the funding source that the "clients" have progressed seems to be the killer -- how can you possibly claim that "native-language literacy" is a marketable skill?

Those of us who are ESL teachers are acutely aware of the situation. Naturally we see it from our own professional point of view. Every day the ESL teacher writes things on the board, and every day the ESL teacher realises all over again that there are students in the class who seem to be oblivious of the writing on the wall. At staff meetings we keep saying "Their literacy skills are very low ... what we really need is a pre ESL class for people too low to go straight into ESL 1 ..."

Let's say Fulano is such a person: Fulano has decided to come to class. Why? Let's say it's because today at work a guy finally made him lose his temper. This guy keeps insulting Fulano and then says "Hey, I'm just kidding!" But today the guy went too far, Fulano told the guy "FOQYU" and the situation at work got very ugly. So Fulano decides he must go to class so that he can learn how to defend himself, what to say other than "FOQYU"and "I sorry."

But the teacher doesn't let him in the classroom. Instead she gives him something to read, in English. It's a test. But reading is not what he needs. He needs to know how to put someone in his place, how to get someone off his back, without risking a punch in the face. The teacher asks him many questions, how long he studied in school when he was a kid. Fulano did well in school, finished sixth grade, but didn't go on to secundaria because he wanted to help support his family. (He's earned his living since he was thirteen.) The teacher "places" Fulano in the newly-funded "Native Language Literacy/pre-ESL" class. Here he learns how to improve his literacy skills in Spanish. How to use the subjunctive.

Meanwhile, at work, the guy who has been bugging him invites him out for a beer. It seems they may become friends. It seems maybe saying "FOQYU", if you say it right, is how you make friends in this country.

Fulano stops going to the "Native Language Literacy/pre-ESL" class. The agency sees this as an attendance problem, a retention problem, an attrition problem ... The teacher's salary is in jeopardy. [Performance-based funding! Try saying that in Spanish!]

All of this is very familiar to those of us who teach in ESL programs.

Perhaps the problem, the "gap in services", will rapidly diminish if we can just succeed in keeping up this two-way translation process. Can the Coalition nourish a two-way dialogue -- not only between teachers and students, but between "English" and "Spanish", between "Adult Literacy" and alfabetizacion, between two points of view?

How can we find the words to express in English what seems so obvious when we converse in Spanish? Perhaps I can tell a story to make one "obvious" point .... Let me be Fulano and tell you what the "gap in services" looks like from the other side of the language barrier:

I am Fulano. I know there are millions like me in the USA. We all want to improve our control of the English tongue so that we can defend ourselves, so that we can translate for our newly-arrived brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, compadres, in-laws -- so that we don't have to pull our kids out of school when we have to face the doctor, the policeman, the landlord.

You are an ESL teacher. You tell me you will teach me English -- for free. I don't have to pay a penny. I accept this, but I know if I don't pay the piper, I can't call the tune. I have never asked for charity, and I don't want you to teach me if you get nothing in return, if it costs you. But I know someone pays you. Who? Who pays you to teach me? Who calls the tune? The government pays you. You work for the government. You will teach me what the government wants you to teach me.

I can see your personality. I cannot read English, but I can read people. I can read you "like a book". I can see you are a very good person, kind, very patient, full of love. Very intelligent. Not rich. Very courteous, very respectful.

But I can also see that you work for the government. I know that the government of this country and the government of my country are different, but I know that no government gives money away -- there are always strings, the government always buys at least a million dollars' worth of power for every million dollars it "spends". If it didn't get its money's worth, it would be a very weak government, it would tumble.

All of this I know, not as an abstract concept, but because I can see it when I look at you, I read it in the way you use your body, the way you sit, the way you use your eyes. I can read the limits that the government sets for you. Within these limits you are free, but you cannot go beyond them. If you did you would lose your salary and be as poor as I am.

The government says I must sit in a classroom with other people who can't speak English. I have no problems in the classroom. My problems are outside the classroom. If you could sit in my kitchen, meet my family, you would see that paying my electricity bill is more urgent than reading a book. How can I read a book in the dark?

My problems are outside the classroom, and the solution to my problems are outside the classroom. I am learning English -- but not from books. From my new friend, the guy who bought me a beer after I told him FOQYU. He wants to talk dirty in Spanish. I teach him dirty words in Spanish, he teaches me to talk dirty in English. But not only dirty. When his friends insult him he doesn't say FOQYU, he says GIMIABREIK. Today at work I said GIMIABREIK six times. Each time I said it, everyone laughed and I made more friends. I told my children "Don't say FOQYU, say GIMIABREIK". They laughed and said "Daddy's learning English." I want to laugh with my children. I don't want them to laugh at me...

* * * * *

The "biggest gap in services" can be bridged. Speaking in my own voice now, not as Fulano, but as Coordinator of the Lawrence Literacy Coalition, I hope to convince the Coalition to regard the Hispanic Community not as a bottomless pit of insoluble problems, not as an unreachable target population, but as a resource, a valuable untapped resource. And the same goes for other Linguistic Minorities.

The Hispanic Community contains a lot of diversity, many Fulanos. There's the one whom I've portrayed here, a self-reliant laborer whose "problem" is that he wants to get along with his fellow workers. Why let a language barrier get in the way? During the Bread and Roses Strike, pamphlets were translated daily here in Lawrence into 23 languages ...

But there's the other Fulano, the one who wrote "Even in My Own Language" (which I circulated as Working Paper #2 -- let me know if you didn't get a copy). He claims to represent colleagues in Lawrence who communicate with the whole community, not just those on one side of the language barrier. These "fully literate" bridge-builders provide an invaluable service. And it seems to me that what is called the Hispanic Community contains many such bridge-builders who want to help.

Can we, the Lawrence Literacy Coalition, make room for a Linguistic Minority Task Force? It's ready to go: all that's needed is for the Coalition to say, whole-heartedly, "Let there be a Linguistic Minority Task Force" -- and there will be one, with energetic talented members working hard to lower the so-called "language barrier" from the other side of the gap.

(Of course I myself can say "Let there be a Linguistic Minority Task Force" --but is that enough? Would that do? Would that bring it into existence? Others have to legitimie its role, let it "take the floor", give it "equal time", guarantee that it work will not be unintentionally belittled or invalidated.

Maybe all it takes to reach the hard-to-reach is a willingness to meet each other half way, a willingness to accept the limits of the RFP process, since no such process will ever recruit, retain and positively terminate Fulano. A willingness to yield, to relax a little, to give Fulano a break.

Perhaps the simplest way to sum up what I am trying to say is this: The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. The RFP killeth but the spirit of friendship giveth life. There is a lively spirit animating Lawrence, a spirit of vigorous democracy, guiding it into the future. This spirit cannot be captured by mere literacy, neither by ESL Literacy nor by Native Language Literacy.

Literacy has its value. But the spirit of dialogue -- and I mean the free give and take of face to face spoken dialogue -- may prove even more valuable in the end.

Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts

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LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION

Working Paper #4

A Comprehensive Five Year Literacy Plan for the Lower Merrimack Valley

Tomas Mario Kalmar
May 9, 1988

NECCUM

Northeast Consortium
of Colleges and Universities
in Massachusetts

51 Lawrence Street, Lawrence, MA 01841
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May 9, 1988

Patricia Karl
NECCUM/Lawrence Coordinator
51 Lawrence Street
Lawrence, MA 01840

Dear Patricia Karl,

Enclosed is the penultimate version of the Comprehensive Plan designed at your request by the Lawrence Literacy Coalition.

The work has relied, and will continue to rely, upon the cooperation of several hundred people representing the full spectrum of institutions and ethnic groups in the Lawrence area. We are circulating copies of this version (minus the Appendices) throughout the Coalition, and will be collating corrections, revisions, and additions to complete the final version due at the end of this fiscal year.

As Coordinator of the Lawrence Literacy Coalition I want to offer you heartfelt thanks for the wonderful support you and your colleagues at NECCUM have given to this project.

Sincerely,

Tomás Kalmar

Tomás Kalmár
Coordinator, Lawrence Literacy Coalition

NECCUM

**Northeast Consortium
of Colleges and Universities
in Massachusetts**

51 Lawrence Street, Lawrence, MA 01841
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A COMPREHENSIVE FIVE YEAR LITERACY PLAN FOR THE LOWER MERRIMACK VALLEY

Prepared by

LAWRENCE LITERACY COALITION
Tomas Mario Kalmar, Coordinator

for
The Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities
in Massachusetts

jointly sponsored by
The Lawrence Gateway Cities Program
and
City of Lawrence Department of Training and Development

April 28, 1988

**Bradford College • Emerson College • Endicott College • Gordon College • Marian Court Junior College
Merrimack College • Middlesex Community College • Montserrat College of Art • North Shore Community
College • Northern Essex Community College • Salem State College • University of Lowell**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the following for their kind permission to include their Needs Assessments as Appendices C, B, and D respectively.

* Senator Patricia McGovern and the Center for Field Services, University of Lowell, Lawrence Postsecondary Education, October 1985

* Yohel Camayd-Freixas and YCF Associates, Hispanics in Lawrence: A Demographic Analysis, December 1985, prepared for the Lawrence Area Department of Social Services and the Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs

* Laura B. Clausen, Associate Vice Chancellor, and Janise Arlena Alomar, Senior Planning Associate, City of Lawrence Educational Needs Analysis: A Demographic and Socioeconomic Context for Educational Reform, March 1, 1988, prepared for the Board of Regents of Higher Education

A key finding of Senator McGovern's needs assessment was that, three years ago, in Greater Lawrence, there was "no consistent use of demographic and business projections by providers of postsecondary educational programs to plan training appropriate for future needs of the community or the individual." (see Executive Summary, 2.b, page 2)

This seems to be still the case today. Conflicting, inadequate and inaccurate demographic data can undermine the validity of any rational plan. YCF Associate's Demographic Analysis (included as Appendix B) is impeccable and digs deep. The patterns it identifies and the policies it recommends are still valid today, although the actual numbers are becoming obsolescent. The Board of Regents' assessment (Included as Appendix D) is the most recent. It relies on the estimates of knowledgeable community leaders for its figure of "25,000 to 35,000 Hispanics" residing in Lawrence in 1987 (Appendix D, p.4)

These three needs assessments included in our Appendices establish a high-water mark for accurate demographic analysis, for which we acknowledge our gratitude.

Thanks are also due to the Council of Presidents, Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts, Financial Planning Task Force, ESL Consortium, Staff of the City of Lawrence Department of Training and Development as well as the hundreds of individuals and groups who have worked to help the Lawrence Literacy Coalition become a reality in a relatively short period of time.

The Coordinator gives a special thank-you to the wonderful NECCUM team for their wise and cheerful support of this challenging undertaking.

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	E. PIC's LMV Needs Assessment	
	F. Support Letters from "0-4 LEP" Adults	

One final remark: The Bureau of Adult Education's allocation of $68,000 (FY '88) to the whole Lower Merrimack Valley is a drop in the bucket compared to the $2,500,000 of other public funds (beyond the SDA's control) dedicated to adult literacy in Lawrence alone. Our SDA's final ABE budget will obviously have to be interpreted in the context of a far more comprehensive plan for the region. But in the meantime, the call for an ABE plan is an excellent point of departure.

Purpose of Plan

This plan is provisional. It is designed to stimulate further constructive thinking and increase collaboration within the Lawrence Literacy Coalition and among interested parties in the rest of the Lower Merrimack Valley. The final plan, due to be completed by June 30, will chart an itinerary for the next five years negotiated through the interaction and mutual support of all adult literacy activities and services between now and 1992.

Will the plan ever be implemented? That depends on whether the Coalition maintains the momentum that has hitherto energized a fruitful collaborative process.

Organization of Plan

The Board of Education's ABE Implementation Plan is organized in a very helpful format. A similar format has been used in this plan. The major exception is that each Objective is provided with only a skeleton calendar: Target for 1992, for FY '89, and for the next two months. Targets for the intervening years (1990, 1991) remain to be decided.

I INTRODUCTION

Overview

Process and Product: Scope and Limits

In partial fulfillment of NECCUM's ABE Planning Grant, this is a comprehensive plan designed to meet the adult literacy needs of the Lower Merrimack Valley in general and of Lawrence in particular over the next five years.

It can be regarded as the 4th in a continuing series of Working Papers; a product of the collaborative process that has animated the Lawrence Literacy Coalition. But this progress report is written by one individual, and therefore everything in it must be regarded as provisional, subject to at least two more months of intensive criticism and revision by all factions of the Lawrence Literacy Coalition, and by interested parties outside Lawrence, especially our local PIC.

The broad-based collaborative process which I have been coordinating (through linkage of the ABE Planning Grant and a Gateway Cities grant) has already yielded a wealth of data, interpretations, issues, strategies, and conflicts -- and since the process is gathering more momentum day by day, it is safe to predict that new voices will soon raise new issues, and old, established voices will have much to say about these new issues.

I have done my best to codify and systemize everything the Coalition has so far said about adult literacy. Naturally this synthesis is informed not only by what I have learned in this region but also by my prior professional experience in Boston and Southern Illinois -- as well as in Australia and Mexico. (I must say Lawrence has much in common with certain towns of comparable size and history in Australia and Mexico.)

Therefore anyone who reads this plan must be warned that, if I have succeeded in making it at all coherent, the coherence is illusory. The State's Bureau of Adult Education set April 28 as the deadline for delivery by our SDA of a Five-Year ABE Plan, and the pressure to honor this requirement has entitled me to impose temporary closure on a very fluid process. In other words, I've made a deliberate decision to "push the river", to offer all interested parties a premature representation of what the Coalition has achieved to date. I have fitted the content into a format closely modelled on that of the Board of Education's Five-Year ABE Implementation Plan. I have, as it were, forced pieces from different jigsaw puzzles to fit into a single frame.

This is worth doing if it successfully provokes the Coalition to focus its constructive thinking, to agree on where we are now, where we will be in 1992, and how we propose to get there.

Quantitative answers to these crucial questions are not officially available. Between now and 1992, the Hispanic population of Lawrence will pass the 50% mark. If the following statistical assumptions are not true today, they will be in the very near future, within the time-period envisaged by this plan:

* There are 30,000 Hispanics in Lawrence
* This is virtually 50% of the total population
* 20,000 Lawrencians communicate in both English and Spanish
* 75% of Hispanics in Lawrence are U.S. citizens
* 50% of Hispanics in Lawrence are over 20 years of age

(The formulas underlying these assumptions are derived from the technically impeccable, detailed demographic analysis conducted in 1985 by YCF Associates. See Appendix B.

Assumptions of Plan

Assumption #1: A literacy plan presupposes a language policy

Whatever "Adult Literacy" may mean elsewhere, in Lawrence it tends to mean "ESL". Even public funds targeted for "mainstream" ABE are subject to this tendency. Workplace Literacy, for example, often turns out to be on-site ESL. Agencies that run performance-driven employment-oriented programs compete fiercely not just for scarce public funds but for scarce clients. At the same time public funding sources that do not target "ESL" compete for scarce vendors. The code-word for this situation is "duplication", a misleading term.

The need for ESL is perceived, by professional adult educators, as virtually bottomless. Northern Essex Community College's $1,000,000 LEEP program has endless waiting lists. It keeps adding "lower" and "lower" levels of ESL, but no matter how "low" it gets, the bulk of the target population seems to be even "lower". The code-word for this clientele is "zero-level", or even "zero-zero".

A comprehensive long-range literacy plan for this community must incorporate a rational strategy for containing this pressure to reduce "Adult Literacy" to "low-level ESL". If every dollar available to adult education must be given either to ESL or to "mainstream" ABE, a rational criterion is sorely needed to divide the "pie" equitably in the community's best interests. But no such criterion has hitherto been evolved. If currently the two giants in the network (LEEP and the Adult Learning Center) have more or less cornered the market on ESL and ABE respectively, this division of labor between a Community College and the Lawrence Public Schools does not reflect a coherent language policy. Why should a community college offer ESL to adults who are completely illiterate? Why should the Lawrence Public School be excluded from its historic role in this arena? No sociolinguistic rationale underlies these patterns. And the same applies to the dozens of other smaller programs throughout Lawrence.

Without a language policy at the City level, a rational balance between "ESL" and "ABE" will never be achieved by a free-for-all competitive process. Formulating a language policy is therefore the first step in designing a comprehensive literacy plan. This step must begin with factual answers to the most basic sociolinguistic questions:

* How many Hispanics are there in Lawrence today?
* How many will there be five years from now?
* How many people in Lawrence speak both Spanish and English?
* How many speak neither?
* How many speak Spanish but no English?
* How many speak English but no Spanish?

Assumption #2: ESL cannot change skin color

In 1970 the Census counted Hispanics under the rubric "Spanish Language". In 1980 this was changed to "Spanish Origin". In Lawrence in 1980, 10,289 people identified themselves as "Spanish Origin". Only 684 Lawrencians identified themselves as "Black". It follows that the vast majority of Hispanics did not then, and do not now, identify themselves as Black.

This observation brings to the surface an issue which Lawrencians discuss in private, though rarely in public: the question of color or race. If you tell me you're white and I don't concur, a tension may be created between us which will not be resolved by my telling you to go and improve your literacy skills or your command of fluent English speech. ESL classes will not change the skin color of the target population. Where color prejudice is the real problem, ABE funding is not the solution.

In due course, Lawrence will have a preponderance of bilingual Hispanics who experience no "language barrier". If at that point, the barrier is still invoked, it will be by those who maintain a "language prejudice". Language prejudice is related to, and may well be an expression of, color or race prejudice, since (unlike previous immigrant groups) Hispanics may appear "non-white". Officially the population of Lawrence is only 3.2% Black. But if Hispanics were counted as Blacks this could go up to 40% or 50%.

A study of racism in Lawrence (within the Hispanic communities, as well as between "Anglos" and Hispanics) is clearly outside the scope of this plan. But to the extent that racism of one sort or another is the real problem, blaming the victim is not the solution. An enlightened language policy must address the question who needs what according to whom? Of course most Hispanics want to communicate freely in English. But what they really need may be quite different from what other people say they need.

Assumption #3: Literacy is not a panacea

Racism is only one of the many social problems which a literacy plan cannot pretend to solve. This ought to go without saying, but current public discourse on Adult Literacy does tend to go overboard in claiming that illiteracy causes all sorts of social problems from overcrowded housing to teenage pregnancy to drug addiction, etc. etc. But you can't wag the dog by the tail: if someone doesn't read because they have no home, or because raising three toddlers exhausts them, or because they're strung out on drugs, prescribing Adult Literacy classes as a remedy may be a cruel joke.

This assumption, together with the first two, circumscribes the scope and limits of this plan. Within these limits, many varieties of adult literacy have ample room for play. Language and literacy issues need to be dealt with in the context of social realities, but deciding where to draw the line between Adult Literacy and the rest of life is an enabling act.

Assumption #4: Lawrence can pave the way

Those who feel Lawrence is falling behind can point to many sociological indices to validate their attitudes: housing density, income distribution, birth rates, dropout rates, etc. etc.

There are many who believe Lawrence can solve its own problems and does not need to become totally dependent on outside help to survive as a community.

And there are those (both inside and outside Lawrence) who see Lawrence as the wave of the future. Without denying the negative statistics, they point to one positive fact: linguistically, where Lawrence is today the United States as a whole will not be until the 21st centure. And there are thoughtful people throughout the Commonwealth who are watching to see how Lawrence responds to this demographic challenge.

If so-called "Anglos" and "Hispanics" can maintain common ground and pull together to implement a broad-minded long-range literacy plan, the benefit could spread to those communities in Massachusetts which will be following after, where Lawrence has gone before.

An upbeat assumption, to balance the first three.

Public Funding for Adult Literacy Services in Lawrence

The following check-list summarizes data available to the Coordinator as of 4/28/88. Figures are approximate and subject to official verification. Inaccuracies and omissions will be rectified in the final version of this Plan.

AGENCY	FUNDING SOURCE	AMOUNT $	GRAND TOTAL $	%/Total	# CLIENTS
NECC/LEEP	Board of Regents	814,000			
	DPW/ET	150,000	940,000 ++	37%	1,500
A.L.C.	State DOE	129,500			
	10% Addendum	12,950			
	LOCAL Monies	413,930			
	Comm. Lit. Camp.	25,500			
	AT&T	28,752			
	POLO	3,420			
	DPW (LARE)	33,750			
	LHOC	11,200	788,854	30%	1,461 (YTD)
LHA	EOCD	166,000			
	In-kind match	150,000	316,000	12%	200
Int. Inst.	(Not available)	100,000(?)	100,000	4%	(na)
22 agencies	Gateway Cities	21,000±	458,000**	0.7%±	(na)
GRAND TOTAL			2,602,854	100%	

Notes

++ Not including financial aid available to clients
(YTD) Year to date
** This figure depends on definition of "literacy" (See below)
(na) Not available yet
± Average

II NEED AND SERVICE AVAILABILITY

A plan usually surveys the needs first and then the available resources, to end with a characterization of the major gaps.

But since Lawrence currently offers well over $2,500,000 of publicly funded Adult Literacy services, this section begins with a summary of available services. But it excludes youth programs on the one hand and vocational skills training on the other. Total budgets for these are also very large.

(Currently the SDA administers only $68,000 of ABE funding. This is divided between a small program in Lawrence and a small program in Haverhill. Needs assessments for the Lower Merrimack Valley outside Lawrence are nowhere near as detailed as the many studies undertaken in Lawrence. But the available data warrants the recommendation that if the SDA's funding remains at this level of less than $100,000, all of it should be targeted for services outside Lawrence)

This global overview, despite missing details, will certainly provoke much discussion among the various interest groups of the Coalition. Apparently, this information has not hitherto been tabulated on one page. Without prejudging the questions the Coalition will voice, or the answers these questions will receive, some general observations are in order.

* The bottom line is over two and a half million dollars

* This is a substantial amount of public funding for a town the size of Lawrence

* More than 80% of this funding is controlled by four major institutions: Northern Essex Community College, Lawrence Public Schools, Lawrence Housing Authority, and the International Institute.

* The SDA has little or no control over the first three of these

---

* The $458,000 figure for Gateway Cities is arrived at, somewhat arbitrarily, by combining the cost of 22 programs that could reasonably be described as "newcomer literacy activities"

* The average cost to the public of each of these Gateway Cities programs is about $21,000, or less than 1% of the bottom line.

* Competition for tiny slices of the "pie" is often quite fierce

* Collaboration between the four major institutions at the top of the list is well established

* The lack of a rational referral network linking all these programs is universally lamented

* Hitherto, the SDA's attempts to create a centralized referral network have resembled the attempts of a weak medieval king to impose central authority on powerful, unruly barons

The major questions to be answered by the Coalition include:

* Is two and a half million dollars enough to meet Lawrence's adult literacy needs?
* If not, why not?
* If there are still unmet needs, can the present system meet them?
* How much public funding would be enough?
* If the 'pie' gets bigger, how can it be divided equitably?

Other Linguistic Minorities

The consensus is that Southeast Asian refugees need a constellation of services. Collaboration between publicly-funded agencies and certain church-based services is highly desirable.

"Mainstream" Illiterates

The needs of "mainstream" illiterates -- monolingual English-speaking adults who cannot read and write a sentence -- tend to be overlooked. This need is currently being addressed by the Adult Learning Center thanks to a $25,500 Commonwealth Literacy Campaign grant. Lawrence Public Library has recently been designated a Literacy Resource Center and has innovative approaches in the planning stage.

The Rest of the Lower Merrimack Valley

It is widely believed that, of the public funding administered by the SDA, 65% goes to Lawrence + 35% to the rest of the Merrimack Valley The Private Industry Council has collected data documenting the need for adult basic education city by city. (See Appendix E)

The results of this needs assessment can be summoned by listing cities in the Lower Merrimack Valley in order of need:

Lawrence
Haverhill
Methuen
Salisbury
Amesbury
Merrimac
Newburyport
Groveland
Georgetown
Rowley
W. Newbury
Newbury
N. Andover
Andover
Boxford

Based on the above data, the Coalition should certainly endorse the co-ordinator's recommendation that the $68,000 of ABE funding at SDA's disposal (assuming level funding for FY '89) should go to the cities immediately below Lawrence in the above list.

Some Unmet Needs

It is safe to estimate that of the 30,000 Hispanics in Lawrence, about 50% or 15,000 have less than 6 years of public schooling. This percentage is based on 1980 Census data. The numbers have increased since then, but the percentage is likely to be the same. Of the 15,000 Hispanics with less than 6 years of public schooling, about 3,000 adults are analfabetos, illiterate; about 5,000 speak both English and Spanish. (CfAssumption #1). Their grasp of English is not based on "book-learning". It is a command of oral speech, often with a well-developed skill at code-switching.

What does this target population need?

The answer to this question depends on whom you ask. Who needs what, according to whom? (Cf Assumption #2). According to ESL professionals, this group of "0-4" and "LEP" adults is doubly "at-risk". What they need is "ESL Literacy" or "Native Language Literacy" or both.

Intensive interviews with individuals and groups from this target population have produced new answers to what they need and desire. The answers vary, of course, from individual to individual. They also vary depending on the environment, the context in which the question is posed. Once they have taken the plunge to enroll in classes, they tend to say that they need whatever it is you're offering. But in their own homes, on their own "turf", they give a quite different set of answers:

a) Analfabetos, who cannot read and write "even in Spanish", need alfabetizacion. This is not the same thing as Native Language Literacy. It is a knowledge of the abecedario: the one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and letters of the alphabet. Analfabetos do not want to study Spanish grammar. They want to know the abecedario of English. What they don't realize, of course, is that English is not written in accord with a rational abecedario. English spelling is etymological, not phonetic.

   This may be the greatest unmet need, the biggest gap in services, the most serious mismatch between program design and the hard-to-reach target population. It is a need which can be met, but not by conventional academic curricula. According to many Hispanics, the dichotomy between "ESL Literacy" and "Native Language Literacy" does not bridge the gap -- if anything it may be widening it.

   Meeting this challenge, which has been posed repeatedly by the Coalition's Bilingual Discussion Groups, would be part of the scope of work of the Linguistic Minority Task Force if formally convened.

b) Hispanics who can already communicate in both English and Spanish say they need and want to refine their translation skills. The value and importance of skilled translation, both oral and written, is considered marginal by the ESL profession, but is placed high on the agenda by the Coalition's Bilingual Discussion Groups. Inaccurate translations, they say, cause much undiagnosed mischief, not to individuals, but to the community at large.

Northern Essex Community College is already looking at ways to offer high-quality professional interpreter training in this area. Competency-based certification has been suggested.

c) Many other Hispanics, well-educated in Spanish, have expressed a need and desire to pursue serious academic study side by side with ESL. Mathematics, history, the law and nutrition are typical of the subjects mentioned. A continuing education model, offering college level classes in Spanish could count on enrolling thousands of clients.

The millions of dollars poured into ESL have not hitherto addressed these three needs expressed by the target population itself. The dialogue which has just begun between the Bilingual Discussion Groups, the Linguistic Minority Task Force, the ESL Consortium, and "mainstream" members of the Coalition will certainly bring to the surface other unidentified needs.

For example, the challenge of "Spanglish": many Hispanics communicate with one another in a mixture of English and Spanish. For many Hispanic teenagers, Spanglish is in fact their native tongue. But of course it is not recognized as a legitimate language. It provokes strong objections among both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking purists. Spanglish is almost impossible to spell correctly, since one word may require etymological spelling and the next phonetic. Spanglish poses a serious challenge to the very notion of literacy. Students who speak Spanglish are frequently described by their teachers as "having no language at all".

The importance of Spanglish as an issue has been proposed by the Coordinator of the Coalition, but so far he has found no one who agrees with him!

III Issue Identification

Old issues are being redefined and new ones identified by the Coalition. Where some degree of consensus already exists that an issue needs to be put on the agenda, that issue has been incorporated somewhere in this plan.

Many, if not all, of the issues listed in the State's ABE Implementation Plan (see pp 15-17, and the 15 page section headed "ISSUE IDENTIFICATION: COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS") are being debated within the Lawrence Library Coalition as well. Most of these issues are "contested issues". The Coalition is creating a forum in which those who don't agree on one issue can hear each other out. This process will not end on June 30. A procedure for reaching closure on key issues may, however, be in place by then. (See Objective 1)

IV Recommendations for Implementation

On the basis of the Coalition's progress to date, a five year implementation plan is proposed. Objectives appear on the following pages. While not inclusive, they provide a check-list for future decisions by the Coalition.

Key issues to be decided over the next five years are:

1. Strengthening and extending the Coalition's Collaborative process
2. Formulating and implementing a language policy for Lawrence
3. Controlling the public cost of adult literacy services
4. Rationalizing the allocation of public funds to optimise mutual networking, productivity, and equity
5. Making room for full participation by Hispanics in the definition of Hispanic literacy needs and in the development of educational activities to meet their needs

OBJECTIVE I: To incorporate the Lawrence Literacy Coalition

Within Five Years: 1993

1. The Coalition is fully established with
    1. Elected Governing Board
    2. Executive Committee
    3. General Membership of at least 1000
    4. Active Task Forces including:
        * Financial Planning Task Force
        * Linguistic Minorities Task Force
        * Colleges and Universities Task Force
        * Legislative Action Task Force
        * Workplace Education Task Force
        * Teachers' Issues Task Force
        * Supportive Services Task Force
        * Staff Development Task Force

2. The Lawrence Literacy Coalition collaborates closely with other systems including
    1. Lawrence Public Schools K-12
    2. Commonwealth Futures
    3. Youth Programs
    4. PIC ET System
    5. Community College System

Within FY 1989:

1. The Coalition is incorporated as a non-profit voluntary association

2. A steering Committee co-ordinates the convening of Task Forces

3. A By-Laws committee establishes criteria for

    * General Membership

    * Election to Executive Committee

    * Terms of Office

    * Task Forces articulate scope of work

    * Establish close connection with other Regional Literacy Coalition through MCAL and urban Literacy Network

Within Two Months

1. Each existing Task Force articulates its Scope of Work

    * Financial Planning

    * ESL Consortium

    * Linguistic Minority Issues

OBJECTIVE II: To implement a Language Policy for Lawrence

Within Five Years: 1993

1. A language policy which reduces both language prejudice and the language barrier is followed by all public agencies, especially adult literacy programs

2. Equity in allocation of public funding between ESL and non-ESL programs is maintained by an accepted formula in accord with Lawrence's language policy

Within FY 1989:

1. All factions within the Lawrence Literacy Coalition study the range of language policy options, reach consensus, and advocate the best policy for the city

2. Linguistic Minority Position Paper is written in support of Objective IIIof State ABE Implementation Plan (p.26, #2)

Within FY 1989:

1. The Linguistic Minority Task Force and the ESL Consortium collaborate to list the range of options for a rational city-wide language policy and to articulate the pros and cons of each option

OBJECTIVE III: To establish a coherent funding policy for meeting adult literacy needs

Within Five Years: FY 1993

1. Complete, detailed, accurate data is annually available for all publicly funded adult literacy programs in the region

2. Accurate demographic estimates and projections are analyzed annually to track progress in reducing gaps in services

3. Major adult education institutions collaborate closely with Task Forces of the Coalition to plan grant proposals and eliminate unnecessary competition and duplication

Within FY 1989:

1. The Financial Planning Task Force expands to include representation by small, under-funded adult literacy programs

2. Complete, accurate, detailed data is compiled by Financial Planning Task Force to document current demographics and funding patterns

3. Cost-benefit analysis of current public-funding patterns conducted by Private Industry Council

Within Two Months

1. Data available in this plan is circulated to all members of the Coalition for correction, analysis and revision.

OBJECTIVE IV: To provide and coordinate appropriate and adequate support services

Within Five Years: FY 1993

1. All publicly-funded adult literacy programs participate in a system-wide linkage and referral network

2. Informed counseling is available to all clients at every point of entry in the system

3. Referral-based funding is integrated into all adult literacy RFP's to provide incentive to all vendors

4. "Slots" in centralized daycare, transportation, and other supportive services available to minor vendors with

Within FY 1989

1. Supportive Service model developed by International Institute and Lawrence Housing Authority is reviewed by Coalition

2. Plan for expanding supportive services for home-bound, elderly, and other clientele (especially Asian refugees) developed by Supportive Services Task Force

3. Supportive Service Task Force develops strategies for overcoming obstacles in creating of complete linkage and referral system

OBJECTIVE VI: To facilitate network of non-funded literacy activities

Within Five Years: 1993

1. Lawrence Literacy Coalition serves as clearing-house for information on low-profile non-funded adult literacy activities

Within FY 1989

1. Coalition collects information on full range of current non-funded adult literacy activities in churches and clubs

2. Coalition collaborates closely with churches, clubs and voluntary associations to encourage "Friends Teaching Friends" model of adult literacy

Within Two Months

1. Coalition assists Lawrence Public Library in development of "Do-It-Yourself" Literacy kits

Within Two Months:

1. Inventory of currently available supportive services and identification of major gaps compiled by Coalition

OBJECTIVE V: To provide staff development and technical assistance wherever needed

Within Five Years: 1993

1. Institute a Lawrence-based Staff Development Center modeled on Boston's Adult Literacy Resource Institute and New York's Literacy Assistance Center

2. Establish network of technical assistance consultants drawn primarily from local teachers and administrators and only secondarily from outside experts

3. Successful innovations in local adult literacy programs documented and disseminated on a regular annual basis

Within FY

1. Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (NECCUM) convenes interdisciplinary "think-tank" on literacy

2. Staff development needs and resources assessed throughout the Coalition's membership

Within Two Months:

1. Convene Staff Development Task Force

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

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Date Filmed

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